

Landowners with timber damaged by hurricanes should assess losses and take steps to recover lost value and plan for the future. The Alabama Forestry Commission strongly recommends that landowners consult with a professional forester. Professional foresters will protect the management ideals of the landowner while ensuring the proper appraisal of the timber, sale administration and environmental compliance.

The following are some general rules for assessing timber damage. It is not meant to be a complete guide but rather things to consider when talking with a professional forester.

Pine stands suffer a wide range of lean and breakage in a hurricane.

- Any young pines (30 feet and shorter) leaning 30 degrees or more will likely not produce higher end products such as poles, sawtimber and veneer.
- Trees leaning 15 degrees or less should recover.
- More mature pine (greater than 30 feet in height) can have more lean and still recover, but most should be 20 degrees or less.
- If the lean and windthrow has caused roots to become exposed or damaged, these trees should be removed.



Breaks of main stems and branches on pines should be assessed.

- Most pine trees will die if their tops are completely broken off.
- Most pines will survive if three or more live limbs remain; however, there will be substantial loss of growth.
- Any breakage in the pine stem or roots and major wounds will become a prime entry point for insects and disease, which ultimately weakens the timber stand, e.g., southern pine beetle and blue stain fungus.
- Large pine trees with stem breakage suffer serious wood structure damage, forcing sawmills to trim back four to six feet from the breakage point.

Hardwoods can keep longer after wind damage as long as the roots are in the soil.

- Unlike pines, a storm-damaged hardwood with a portion of the rootball attached to the ground may survive an additional 6-12 months.
- However, wood may begin to degrade much sooner, so these trees should be salvaged as soon as possible.

- Limb breakage in hardwoods is not as serious a problem as in pines since most hardwoods sprout prolifically and redevelop a crown.

Timber harvested in post-storm conditions present additional danger and cost.

- Timber sold in post-storm conditions may have higher logging costs factored into the final sale lowering the return to the landowner.
- The timing of selling storm-damaged timber is important. Generally, after a major storm, there is a temporary wood glut on the market, which may lower the price of the timber.



This information is provided by the Alabama Forestry Commission

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